Supervisor Checklist for Supporting Remote Work

Working remotely works best when employees and supervisors communicate clearly about expectations. The following checklist will help you establish a foundation for effective remote working, continued productivity, and service to the UWS community.

1. **Review technology needs and resources.** Identify technology tools employees use in their daily work and determine whether the resources will be accessible when working from remotely. Also, ensure employees know how to access the appropriate technical support, should they need assistance.
   a. Confirm that employees know how to use the Microsoft Teams call function and how to access their voicemail.
   b. Determine which platform(s) you will use to communicate as a team, clarify expectations for online availability, test and confirm everyone has access to and proficiency with the technology tool(s). UWS employees have free access to Zoom and Microsoft Teams and your department may have additional tools or resources.
   c. Ensure alternative worksite safety.
   d. Consider the following list of potential technology needs:
      i. High speed internet access
      ii. Laptop/computer
      iii. Set up for Remote Desktop Connection on both ends
      iv. Up-to-date anti-malware software installed
      v. Multi Factor Authentication set up for more than just one device (especially if only device is work phone)
      vi. Virtual Private Network (VPN) installed and instructions on how to use
      vii. Phone (headset) – set up with Microsoft Teams
      viii. Files available in secure shared location

2. **Review work schedules.** Remote working can be confused with flex work. Be clear about your expectations with employees for maintaining their current work schedule or if you are open to flexible scheduling based on employee needs.
   a. The UWS work week is Sunday – Saturday.
   b. A 37.5-hour work week should be consistently maintained
   c. Any flex work or make-up time must be completed within the same work week

3. **Draft a work plan.** Review the questions below with employees and work through answers together.
   a. What routine responsibilities/tasks cannot be fulfilled while working remotely and how will it impact operations or other people? What are ways to reduce any identified impacts?
   b. Are there cross-training opportunities to identify backup employees who can do essential work within and/or interdepartmental? Plan for employee absences. What key processes have been identified for each area/or department? Will there be specific platform access necessary to fulfill these processes?
   c. What routine responsibilities/tasks require regular communication and collaboration with others? Proactively contact each other to confirm how you will communicate while working remotely.

d. Are there critical work activities that are vulnerable to the absence of a small number of key employees?
e. Identify which teams or individuals have limited or no experience with remote work.
f. What training will be necessary for remote work tools and technology?
g. Identify and agree on strategic priorities during this time.
h. Implement a test exercise to test your plan.
i. Oftentimes employees experience fewer interruptions while working remotely. Are there any special projects, tasks, or online training that you can advance while working remotely?
j. What events or meetings are scheduled and how will these meetings/events be attended by remote employees?
k. What follow-up should to occur due to postponements or cancellations? What circumstances require on-site attendance?
l. Identify employees who may need special requirements or currently have work accommodations, and plan accordingly.
m. Identify employees who will have access to the building, labs, or facilities.
n. Provide resources or the process for technical support.

4. **Make a communication and accountability plan.** Supervisors should tell employees how often they should send updates on work plan progress and what those updates should include. Supervisors should also communicate how quickly they expect the employee to respond and the best ways for the employee to contact the supervisor while working remotely. Current performance standards are expected to be maintained by employees.
   a. If you normally make daily rounds to visit employees at their desks, you can give them a call during this period. Maintain team meetings and one-to-one check-ins, altering the schedule if needed to accommodate any alternative schedules that have been approved.
   b. Conduct regular check-ins. Consider starting each workday with a phone, video, or instant message chat. Your employees will be eager for connection and information during the disruption, and the structure will help everyone create a positive routine. Every other day or weekly check-ins may be fine, so long as you are in contact frequently enough that your employees are in sync with you and/or with one another.
   c. Prepare an emergency communication plan. Identify key contacts (with backups), chains of communications for tracking business and employee statuses.

5. **Be positive.** A positive attitude and a willingness to trust employees to effectively work remotely is key to making such arrangements successful and productive. Working remotely presents an opportunity for supervisors to become better managers. Instead of focusing on how many hours your employees are working, re-emphasize a focus on measuring results and reaching objectives—regardless of work arrangement. The employee's completed work product is the indicator of success, rather than direct observation. By focusing on the employee's work product, supervisors will improve their organizational abilities and their own skill in managing by objectives.

Tips for Employees Working Remotely

Employees often learn working remotely is different than they expected, and it requires specific skills and habits. The following tips will help employees get to work while at home:

1. **Define your workspace.** Employees who are experienced in working remotely may tell you it is often difficult to stay focused at home. We are creatures of habit and most of us are used to our normal home routines. Establishing a workspace, even if it is your kitchen table, gives your brain a cue that it is time for work. Wearing attire, you may wear to the office even if it is your "casual Friday" attire may cue the brain. You should remain capable of reporting to work if your presence is requested by your supervisor.

2. **Master the basics.**
    a. Know how to use the call function in Microsoft Teams and how to access voicemail.
    b. Use Teams, Zoom or another instant messaging client to stay connected to colleagues.
    c. Plan for video calls/meetings by making sure you know how to turn on your computer's camera (if available) and microphone and being aware your colleagues may be able to see the background behind you.
    d. Make sure you have the supplies you need: pens, paper, chargers, etc.

3. **Set daily goals, track them, and share your progress.** You may be surprised by how differently the workday passes without the comings and goings of an office to break things up or influence what you do next. Consider starting each day of remote work by writing down what you need to accomplish and then track your progress. Pay attention to how long tasks take you and start adjusting your daily goals to match your current rhythm. Update your email/voicemail/skype location/calendar, etc. to indicate your work situation. Communicate with your supervisor and/or colleagues if you think your remote work plan needs to be adjusted.

4. **Eliminate distractions.** Home can mean pets, children or a favorite hobby are only a few feet away. Depending on your living arrangement, you may need to hang a "do not disturb" sign so your family members don't interrupt you. Pets often need a closed door to keep them away and you might need headphones to block the noise.

5. **Prioritize privacy.** Whether you are in your home or a common area, take five minutes to assess the privacy of your workspace. Can someone standing behind you read your computer screen? Are your windows open so your neighbor can hear your phone call? What information do you need to secure before grabbing a cup of coffee or heading to the restroom? Your personal privacy matters too, so see if there is anything around you that you would not want visible during a video conference with your supervisor or colleague.

6. **Remember Public Records Law.**

    a. Keep in mind the work employees do while working remotely, even on their personal devices for university work conducted, remains subject to university public records laws and other applicable regulations.

7. **Continue to employ security best practices.** Situations like these are prime phishing opportunities. Remain vigilant for security concerns and be sure to report suspicious emails as recommended by the UWS IT team.
    a. It should be noted that caution needs to be taken when dealing with personal health information ("PHI") and HIPAA/FERPA matters while working from home

or another off-site location. If you have questions, contact Human Resources for additional information.
   b. VPNs can also allow you to safely connect to a remote network of computers as if you are there. If need help or additional information, contact the IT help desk.
   c. You are expected to follow the remote work equipment safeguards outlined in the university's ***Remote and Hybrid Work Schedules Policy***.
8. **Stay connected.** Many people say they do not call or instant message colleagues who are working remotely because they don't want to bother them. Remember, they are working, not vacationing at home! You should feel confident about calling or messaging an employee who is working remotely anytime you would walk to their office or call them if you were working on-site.

Tips for Departments with Widespread Remote Employees

With many teams working remotely, departments may want to adapt the following suggestions:

1. **Consider designating a remote work task force.** Depending on the size of your unit, consider implementing a task force to manage remote working protocols and procedures for your department.
2. **Engage your team.** Setting up a group to work remotely is different than setting up an individual employee to work remotely. Effective remote working requires entire units to embrace technology and proactive communication in ways that may be new and challenging to traditional ways of working. Support the success of your team by:
   a. Scheduling a conversation about what it may look like for your team to work remotely.
   b. Identify needs and tool preferences of team members for remote work.
   c. Document and share remote working practices/plans.
3. **Enable and encourage ongoing communication.** Ongoing communication is the most important part of effective remote teamwork. Working online can be isolating without regular contact with supervisors and colleagues. By creating the expectation an entire team will communicate regularly with one another, members will feel connected regardless of where they are located.